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ABSTRACT

In the increasingly technological world, it is imperative that workers receive training for the jobs of today and retraining for the jobs of the future. It has been proposed that businesses provide all of this training, because businesses benefit from having highly skilled workers and such a system might reduce taxes. This plan is flawed, however, for a number of reasons. For example, the high costs of training by businesses would be passed on to consumers, resulting in higher prices. In addition, many small businesses cannot afford training, and unemployed persons would not benefit from business training, since they would not be able to obtain it. Disabled and disadvantaged people would not be likely to obtain training from employers. Because society benefits from vocational training for a number of reasons, such as more happily employed people and less crime, society as a whole should pay for much of vocational education within the school system as well as through lifelong learning opportunities for persons who have completed school and need or want to retrain. Societal support for vocational education is imperative for the United States to prepare workers for the technical age of today and tomorrow. (KC)

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PHILOSOPHY OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

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by

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Abstract

The author provides a discourse on the philosophy of education in today's political climate. He argues the virtues of vocational education and the necessity for socially funded vocational education as opposed to relying on businesses to provide America's workforce training.

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As the history books state, our nation was founded on agricultural pursuits. Then, as technology advanced, we became a great industrialized nation. Now, that we are seeing the end of the industrial era, our nation is rapidly entering its third stage, the information (technical) era.

At the rapid speed that technology is advancing today, the greater need for technical trained people today, and in the decades to come, the existence of non-skilled jobs is becoming obsolete. Therefore, it is imperative now, and in the future, that the non-skilled person become skilled, as well as the skilled person becoming even higher skilled, in order to survive in the new technical world.

There are very good arguments stating that skilled people benefit business, and, as a result, business should pay for and train people for its own benefit. This is an excellent idea. Businesses should train their employees to a level of higher technical skills that benefits both employees and employer.

Advocates of the business training argument often, wanting businesses to pay the entire vocational training bill and do all the training. The advocates feel that if business pays for the training, and the government does not, then the

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federal budget would look better and personal income taxes may be reduced. This is an excellent idea at first glance. However, as one studies this argument, several negative issues become apparent:

1) If businesses pay the total cost of training, the training cost burden will be reflected in higher cost of goods and services on the market. If consumers are forced to pay a higher cost for goods and services, consumers in this country and others will purchase less expensive goods and services produced in other countries. An example of this would be the home electronics and microwave ovens, which was invented and once manufactured only in the United States. Due to lower manufacturing cost, today all microwave ovens are made off-shore. Business Schools, along with many management classes and books teaching profit and loss strategies for business, clearly define two ways of changing a loss into a profit: either increase sales or cut cost. With less goods and services being sold, our businesses would have to streamline operations, lay off employees, resulting in increased unemployment.

2) Small businesses, which employ the larger percentage of our workforce in this country, often cannot afford to train their employees. Prosser's sixteenth theorem on vocational education (Prosser, C.A. & Quigley, T.H. Vocational Education in a Democracy. Chicago, Illinois: American Technical Society, 1949. {pp. 217-232.}) states: "While every reasonable effort should be made to reduce per capita cost, there is a minimum below which effective vocational education cannot be given, and if the course does not permit of this minimum per capita cost, vocational education should not be attempted.

"Therefore, many small businesses, if forced to offer vocational training, would offer very ineffective training.

3) Many disabled persons, either mentally or physically, have special needs. As a result, many businesses do not desire to train these people. The government could offer special grants to businesses, for training these people, however, this would oppose the argument for improving the federal budget and/or reducing personal income taxes.

4) Socially disadvantaged persons, especially in urban areas, often cannot find businesses who want to hire or train them. Again, the government could offer special grants to businesses to train these people, but that would oppose the argument for improving the federal budget and/or reducing personal income taxes.

5) Unemployed persons without, or in need of, more vocational skills to become employed, are not employed. Since they are not employed by a company, they could not receive training, therefore they are unemployable. Unemployable persons must be financially taken care of by society or they will perish. Since we do not want someone we care about to perish, we have the government support them, again effecting the federal budget and/or raising our personal income taxes.

6) Many educational and social philosophers today agree in that people that like their jobs feel fulfilled and content. People that do not like their jobs feel unhappy, cheated. Much of our crime is from unhappy people. If people whom commit crimes could work at a job they like, they would feel content, stay at the

preferred job, be happy, and would not commit crimes. To reduce crime and violence, and to help society as a whole, people need to receive vocational education for jobs they want to do. Indeed, there is overwhelming evidence to suggest that it is less expensive for society to fund a Harvard or a technical college education than to house a criminal in a penal institution.

7) One hypothesis suggests that children should be exposed at an early age to many occupations, and receive continual exposure and career guidance through adulthood. This supposition implies that with the exposure to the vast occupational options young people may find careers they enjoy. Many businesses have entertained this concept by visiting schools on a regular basis and expose children to their occupations, and many others would, if asked. But businesses have a self interest: people that will help them make profits. It is unlikely that a dental supply business would counsel a person interested in welding, auto technology, robotics, etc..

If businesses are left to do all the vocational training, what happens to the employee who does not like a job and is unhappy? Would a dental supply business offer the unhappy employee training the employee is interested in, such as welding, auto technology, robotics, etc.? No, businesses never have before, and have no reason to do so now. It is against their self interest of making profits. Therefore a business is only going to offer to their employees that training which benefits the company.

Now that our nation is in a information (technical) era, it is imperative that the non-skilled person become skilled, as well as the skilled person becoming

even higher skilled. From the above six negative issues, regarding businesses doing all vocational training, if it were to be so, a large segment of our population would receive no, or ineffective vocational training.

Businesses conducting vocational training are a very valuable benefit to society and our nation. However, we can not rely on business as our only media of vocational training. In order for our nation to succeed in the information (technical) era, we (via our government) must offer vocational training to all who need and can benefit from the training.

Vocational education needs to be lifelong learning, offered through K-12 schools, post secondary vocational schools and colleges, with training all the way to the post graduate level. (hereafter referred to as vocational schools.)

Webster's dictionary defines vocational education as "a school, etc. intended to prepare one for an occupation, sometimes specific in a trade." In order to effectively prepare a trainee for an occupation, the training must be competency based, deriving from the task of the occupation.

Vocational schools must be competency based training, retraining, and upgrading skills for all that want and can benefit from it.

Vocational schools should offer preparatory (initial job training), supplemental (retraining or upgrading skills), apprenticeship instruction (instruction with respect to labor unions), special emphasis vocational training for socially disadvantaged and handicapped, and vocational program support training (ABE,GED,ESL,ITP, etc.).

Vocational schools must initiate, implement, and maintain programs to fulfill the needs of society, industry, and students. Each vocational program should have an advisory committee of industry representatives working closely with the vocational program. The advisory members can provide valuable assistance in projecting labor force needs, conducting student placement analysis, and program evaluation. An alternative to the advisory board is for the vocational school to annually conduct a detailed occupational analysis, insuring the program is competency based from the work-place task, to determine whether the program should be expanded, curtailed, maintained, or abolished.

Vocational school training is specialized. Communicative, numerical, scientific, and human relation skills are embedded in practical instruction. Training that leads to mastery of skills, job placement, and retention should be emphasized.

Instructors must be masters of their craft bringing students insight from several years experience in their particular fields. Besides mastery of the job, the instructor must be up to date on the latest procedures and job requirements. This will assure that students receive the best possible knowledge, and training of the job.

Students weak in basic skills or knowledge necessary for entrance or completion of programs need support services such as:

1) (ABE) Adult Basic Education: for students below the 8th grade level in general academic knowledge.
2) (GED) General Education Development: for students below the 12th grade level in general academic knowledge.
3) (ESL) English as a second language: for immigrant students who are weak on reading, writing, or speaking english.
4) (ITP) Individualized Tutorial Program: specific subject areas a student might need improvement in.

5) Special needs instruction: for socially disadvantaged and handicapped students.

The benefits of vocational schools are evidenced by:

1) students that feel confident and obtain good jobs with successful careers, as well as an income that they can live comfortably on,
2) an industry that receives highly trained people to perform the needed skills of today and the future,
3) to labor to train people, thereby giving sound reasons to request good salaries and benefits,
4) society reaps the rewards of low unemployment and high productivity, especially in the world market,
5) to enable government to get the opportunity to collect taxes and, thereby, justifying the cost of vocational education.

In summary, our nation is now in the information/technical era. Non-skilled jobs are becoming obsolete. Therefore, we must use all media available to offer effective vocational education, business training, government funded vocational education, labor unions, private vocational schools, military training, and so forth. We as a nation can not afford to narrow our focus to only one avenue for vocational education. It is imperative now, and in the future, that the non-skilled person become skilled and the skilled person become even higher skilled, in order for our nations survival in the world today.